Best Crypto Exchanges Compared

Idea In Short

Most crypto exchange comparisons stop at the first purchase, but the real test starts afterward, once a customer wants to convert balances, trade on an order book, or withdraw through a specific blockchain network. Five established platforms were compared across buying routes, Spot Trading, fees, asset coverage, wallet management, withdrawals, and mobile functionality to see which ones held up as account activity grew more complex. CEX.IO ranked first for combining wallet access, direct purchases, Convert, Spot Trading, fiat functionality, and external transfers into one account without forcing a switch to another platform. Kraken stood out for active traders once fee tiers and professional order tools became relevant, Coinbase for its Advanced spot-market catalogue, Binance for its low entry-level fees and altcoin breadth, and Crypto.com for its wide mobile ecosystem built around CRO. The ranking reflects the full account journey rather than a single advertised fee or coin count.

Choosing a crypto exchange becomes harder once you look beyond the first purchase. We spent time with five established platforms and compared buying routes, Spot Trading, fees, asset coverage, Wallet management, withdrawals, mobile functionality, and what the account becomes once you start doing more than buying Bitcoin. CEX.IO ranked first because we found its combination of Wallet access, direct purchases, Convert, Spot Trading, fiat functionality, and external transfers worked particularly well across different levels of experience. Kraken, Coinbase, Binance, and Crypto.com each performed strongly in individual areas and may suit customers with more specialised requirements.

What We Actually Looked for in a Crypto Exchange

After using crypto exchanges for more than 15 years, we have stopped treating the number of listed coins or one advertised trading fee as enough information to rank a platform.

Those numbers are useful, but they rarely explain the full account.

A customer may begin by buying BTC with fiat and later start transferring stablecoins from another wallet. They may eventually want an order book rather than a quoted purchase, or need to withdraw an asset through a particular blockchain network. An exchange that handles the first transaction well can become frustrating once those requirements change.

For this comparison, we followed that progression.

We looked at how money and crypto enter the account, what happens to the resulting balance, the difference between consumer purchase services and Spot Trading, the available market tools, crypto withdrawals, mobile access, regional restrictions, and the overall amount of work required to move between those functions.

We also considered cost in context. A card-funded purchase, fiat deposit followed by a Spot trade, and crypto-to-crypto conversion can follow completely different pricing models on the same platform. Rather than selecting a winner from one percentage, we looked at the transaction route and what the customer receives for the amount spent.

That broader test produced a ranking that looks different from a pure trading-fee table.

1. CEX.IO — Best Overall Crypto Exchange

CEX.IO took first place because it remained useful as we changed the way we used the account.

That was the most important part of our test.

A platform can make a good first impression when somebody buys $100 of Bitcoin and still become restrictive six months later. With CEX.IO, we could move among Wallet management, direct purchases, Convert, Spot Trading, fiat balances, and external crypto transfers without creating a different account or moving assets to another exchange.

The CEX.IO Wallet sits at the centre of that experience.

Customers receive dedicated deposit addresses for supported cryptocurrencies and can find them through the web Wallet or CEX.IO App. Some assets support multiple blockchain networks, in which case the customer selects the intended network before receiving or

sending funds. CEX.IO currently states that customers can deposit more than 200 cryptocurrencies through over 40 supported blockchains, although exact availability depends on jurisdiction and account status.

We found that network support particularly relevant with stablecoins and assets that appear on several chains.

When transferring USDT, for example, the token name alone does not tell us enough. We want to know which network the sending wallet uses, which networks CEX.IO currently accepts for that asset, what the withdrawal cost will be later, and whether the destination supports the same route.

CEX.IO makes customers select the network where more than one is available, which reduces ambiguity but does not remove the need to check the transaction carefully. Sending crypto through an unsupported blockchain can result in lost funds.1

Several Ways to Use the Same Balance

Where CEX.IO became more interesting was what happened after funds reached the Wallet.

We could use a quoted purchase service when we did not want to interact with an order book, exchange supported balances through Convert, or move into Spot Trading when execution price and market depth mattered more.

CEX.IO currently lists more than 400 Spot Trading markets and provides market and limit orders alongside order books and price charts. The Spot Trading experience can also use the main CEX.IO Wallet balance, removing the older requirement to move funds manually between a primary Wallet and the main trading account.

We preferred this setup to exchanges that make consumer purchases and professional trading feel almost unrelated.

A quoted purchase still makes sense for certain transactions. If somebody wants a smaller amount of a supported asset and does not want to manage an order, reviewing a transaction quote can be sufficient.

Spot Trading serves a different purpose.

A market order interacts directly with available liquidity, while a limit order lets the customer define a price and wait for another market participant to match it. That becomes more relevant when order size increases or when we care about where the trade executes rather than simply completing an exchange.

Convert fills the space between the two. It lets eligible customers exchange supported crypto or fiat balances without placing separate orders on an order book. CEX.IO notes that an intermediary currency can be used when a direct conversion pair does not exist.

Having all three routes is one of the reasons CEX.IO came first. We were not forced to treat every crypto transaction as though it required the same level of market involvement.

Funding and Cashing Out

Payment infrastructure also contributed to the ranking.

Depending on location and account eligibility, CEX.IO currently supports cards, bank transfers, crypto deposits, Apple Pay and Google Pay through eligible cards, and PayPal for eligible US customers. Regional differences are significant, so we would always check the payment methods displayed for the actual account rather than assume every global route is available everywhere.

That caveat matters because payment access can influence the exchange choice more than trading features.

Someone with access to a suitable bank-transfer route may approach funding differently from somebody relying on a debit card. Likewise, a customer who already owns crypto may not require fiat funding at all and can simply transfer a supported asset into the Wallet.

We also liked that CEX.IO considers the withdrawal side of the account. Eligible customers can sell or exchange crypto and then review available fiat withdrawal destinations, while crypto can be sent to external addresses through more than 40 supported blockchain networks.

That makes the account more complete than services that focus almost entirely on acquisition.

Where CEX.IO Does Not Lead

CEX.IO did not win every category.

Kraken gave us a more sophisticated professional trading environment. Binance currently has substantially lower entry-level Spot Trading fees and a much larger trading ecosystem. Coinbase advertises more than 550 Spot markets through Advanced. Crypto.com surrounds its account with a broader collection of secondary products.

We would move any of those platforms above CEX.IO for certain customers.

A high-frequency trader may care much more about professional order controls and fee tiers than Wallet-to-Convert continuity. Someone trading a large number of smaller altcoins may value Binance's market coverage. A customer already embedded in Coinbase's fiat infrastructure may gain little by opening another exchange account.

Our ranking reflects the wider customer journey.

Across purchasing, Wallet management, conversions, Spot Trading, fiat access, mobile use, and withdrawals, CEX.IO required the fewest compromises for the mixed activity we tested. That is why it takes first place rather than because it wins every individual specification.

2. Kraken — Best for Customers Who Grow Into Active Trading

Kraken came closest to changing our overall result.

The reason becomes obvious once we move into Kraken Pro. This is a platform designed much more deliberately around trading, with detailed order books, market data, configurable workspaces, several order types, API access, and a fee schedule that becomes significantly more competitive as qualifying activity increases.

Kraken updated its fee structure in July 2026. The current entry Spot tier starts at 0.40% maker and 0.80% taker, then falls as qualifying volume or Assets on Platform increase. At the $10 million tier, the published rates reach 0% maker and 0.10% taker, with additional professional tiers beyond that.2

This creates an interesting result.

Kraken is not automatically cheap for somebody placing small orders. Its strongest pricing appears once the customer generates meaningful volume or otherwise qualifies for a higher tier. That makes it more attractive to active participants than a casual buyer comparing entry-level percentages.

The trading environment follows the same logic.

When we wanted to study market depth and manage orders closely, we preferred Kraken Pro to most of the platforms in this comparison. It exposes more information without forcing that information into the standard purchase experience.

Kraken also separates its consumer purchase services from Pro trading. Customers need to recognise that distinction because a quoted or app-based purchase does not necessarily carry the same economics as an order placed through Kraken Pro.

The Wallet side has also become much more interesting.

Kraken now operates a separate self-custody Kraken Wallet supporting Bitcoin, Solana, Dogecoin, Ethereum and multiple EVM-compatible networks. That product is different from the custodial exchange account and gives users control over wallet credentials rather than keeping the assets within Kraken Exchange custody.

We still place CEX.IO first because its central account made more sense for the varied activity in this particular test.

If we were ranking platforms solely for somebody who expects Spot Trading to become the dominant activity, Kraken could easily take the top position.

3. Coinbase — Best for Broad Spot-Market Access

Coinbase has changed substantially from the consumer-focused platform many long-time crypto users remember.

Its standard account still provides quoted crypto transactions, but Coinbase Advanced now

offers more than 550 Spot markets, real-time order books, TradingView-powered charting, API access, and volume-based fees.3

That market count gave Coinbase one of the clearest numerical advantages over CEX.IO in our comparison.

The split between standard Coinbase and Advanced also works reasonably well once customers understand why both exist.

A person making an occasional purchase can remain in the standard environment without studying an order book. Someone who later wants market-based execution can open Advanced without setting up an entirely separate exchange account.

The economics change with that decision.

Coinbase Advanced uses maker-and-taker pricing, with the actual fee tier determined by applicable activity or balance criteria. Coinbase tells customers to inspect their current tier inside the account, and the applicable charge appears on the order preview.

Standard Coinbase transactions can use another pricing model, so we would not compare a standard purchase directly with an Advanced trading fee.

This is where Coinbase requires a little more awareness from the customer. Saying "Coinbase charges X%" is rarely enough because the answer depends heavily on which Coinbase service processes the transaction.

Its fiat infrastructure remains another major reason to consider it. In markets where Coinbase has strong domestic banking connections, that local funding relationship can outweigh smaller differences elsewhere.

Why third rather than first?

We found CEX.IO's purchase, Wallet, conversion, trading, and withdrawal flow more cohesive for the mixed account we were testing. Coinbase becomes more compelling if its 550-plus market catalogue, local fiat integration, or Advanced interface directly addresses what the customer needs.

4. Binance — Best for Low Spot Fees and Altcoin Market Breadth

Binance presents the opposite challenge from a smaller exchange: there is so much functionality that deciding which part of the platform to use becomes part of the experience.

Its Spot market remains one of the strongest areas.

For a regular user below the first VIP threshold, Binance currently publishes a standard Spot fee of 0.10% maker and 0.10% taker. Customers meeting the relevant conditions can receive different rates, including fee reductions when paying eligible trading fees with BNB.4

That gives Binance a substantial entry-level fee advantage over several exchanges in this comparison.

The trading environment also supports market, limit, stop-limit, and OCO orders, alongside an extensive collection of Spot pairs.

We would therefore move Binance much higher for somebody who trades frequently across a wide range of altcoins.

Its main drawback for this ranking is not a lack of capability. It is the opposite.

Binance contains Spot Trading, Convert, numerous wallet areas, institutional services, APIs, and a long list of secondary products. Availability can also change considerably by jurisdiction, making a general international description of Binance less useful than checking the specific account available in the customer's country.

We spent more time navigating the ecosystem than we did on CEX.IO.

Experienced Binance users may consider that irrelevant because they already know exactly which screens they need. A person joining an exchange for the first time can encounter significantly more product terminology and account areas before establishing a normal routine.

Binance finishes fourth in our overall ranking but wins two categories clearly: published entry-level Spot fees and breadth for customers who expect to trade a large number of assets.

5. Crypto.com — Best for Customers Who Want a Large App Ecosystem

Crypto.com approaches the exchange experience from a strongly mobile direction.

The Crypto.com App currently supports a very large catalogue of cryptocurrencies, while the separate Crypto.com Exchange handles order-book trading with market, limit, and advanced order functionality.

That distinction matters because the App and Exchange do not represent exactly the same type of transaction.

A customer buying an asset through the App can encounter pricing and fees determined at the transaction stage, while the Exchange uses a maker-and-taker schedule.

As of October 2026, Crypto.com Exchange's first Spot tier for customers with less than $10,000 in 30-day volume lists 0.25% maker and 0.50% taker fees without the qualifying CRO balance. Rates decline with higher volume, while customers meeting the relevant CRO requirements can receive different fee treatment.5

We found the connection between pricing and CRO worth understanding before committing heavily to the ecosystem.

Someone who already uses CRO may find those benefits relevant. Somebody who has no interest in maintaining a CRO balance should judge the Exchange using the standard rates that actually apply to their account.

The broader Crypto.com environment extends far beyond Spot Trading, and that can appeal to customers who want many crypto services under one brand.

We found it less focused than CEX.IO for the particular progression we tested. There were more product relationships to understand and more reasons to check whether a function

belonged to the App, Exchange, or another Crypto.com service.

That is not necessarily a drawback for an established Crypto.com customer. It simply made CEX.IO the account we preferred for moving among buying, Wallet management, conversion, Spot Trading, and withdrawals without spending as much time thinking about which product handled each task.

How We Would Choose Between These Five

Our ranking changes once the customer requirement becomes more specific.

For the broadest account, we choose CEX.IO. It gave us several transaction routes without making professional trading the centre of every interaction.

For active Spot Trading, Kraken deserves serious consideration because its professional environment and fee schedule become increasingly relevant as activity rises.

For a very large Spot-market catalogue, Coinbase Advanced is stronger than many people still associate with the Coinbase brand.

For low published entry-level Spot fees and a large altcoin ecosystem, Binance is difficult to ignore.

For customers who want a wide mobile crypto ecosystem and already see value in CRO-related functionality, Crypto.com makes more sense than its fifth-place position may suggest.

That is why we would not open an account based solely on which exchange sits first in a general ranking. The useful question is what we expect to do after the first transaction.

Our Verdict

CEX.IO ranks first in our 2026 comparison because it gave us the most convincing account across several different types of activity rather than dominating one narrow category.

We could receive supported crypto through the Wallet, choose among several funding

routes depending on eligibility, make quoted purchases, use Convert, access more than 400 Spot markets, manage the same core balance across those services, and send supported assets externally through more than 40 blockchain networks.

Kraken takes second and would be our preferred choice for a customer whose activity develops into more intensive professional-style trading. Coinbase ranks third with more than 550 Advanced markets and strong account infrastructure. Binance follows with the lowest published standard Spot fee in this group and a very large trading ecosystem, while Crypto.com rounds out the five with broad mobile functionality and a separate Exchange for order-book trading.

After testing them as complete accounts, our conclusion came back to continuity. We want an exchange that remains useful when a customer goes from buying to transferring, from quoted transactions to order books, and eventually from keeping assets on the exchange to sending them elsewhere. Across that wider journey, CEX.IO gave us the combination we preferred.

- 1What happens if you send crypto to the wrong network?
- 2How trading fees work on Kraken
- 3Coinbase Advanced markets
- 4Binance.US launches 0% maker, 0.02% taker spot trading fees
- 5Crypto.com cuts trading fees and lowers CRO staking rewards

Summary

No single ranking fits every customer, since the right exchange depends on what happens after the first transaction rather than which platform sits atop a general list. CEX.IO earned first place by requiring the fewest compromises across buying, wallet management, Convert, Spot Trading, and withdrawals, while Kraken, Coinbase, Binance, and Crypto.com each win on narrower terms, professional trading tools, market breadth, entry-level fees, and mobile ecosystem depth. Regional availability, payment methods, and fee tiers can shift by jurisdiction and account status, so published figures are a starting point, not a guarantee. The more useful question before opening an account is not which exchange wins a general ranking, but what the customer expects to do once the first purchase is done, whether that

means transferring assets, trading on an order book, or withdrawing through a particular network. Matching that use to the right platform matters more than any single headline fee.